

104-27410

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

17 January 1964

The Honorable John Stennis
The United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Stennis:

This is in reply to your letter of January 13th. As I told you when I saw you at my meeting with your Committee on Friday afternoon, the press report of a "CIA press conference" was something of an over-statement of fact, although circumstances were such that I can understand the reason for the statement.

What happened was that several reporters received unclassified information on the Soviet economy from us and one of them featured the CIA attribution. This brought an avalanche of requests from other reporters who felt that one had been favored with some "inside information." Therefore our people prepared a brief memorandum of just what had been told and invited the inquirers to come out and pick it up. All who inquired were asked to come at a particular hour. The fact that they were met and talked to by a CIA officer during the course of distribution of the memorandum gave rise to the report that it had been a "CIA press conference," which, I think, overstates what happened.

I have been concerned over the fact that the CIA attribution has been given such wide-spread publicity and frankly don't understand why because in this area, namely Soviet economics, CIA has been a recognized authority and has for the past 10 years issued volumes of unclassified reports of one sort or another which have been distributed to libraries and universities. Moreover, the subject was a favorite subject of my predecessor who looked upon it as one area which he could treat freely and publicly in open forum. You may recall there was an open hearing by the Joint Economic Committee on 13 November 1959 at which the Director of Central Intelligence testified.

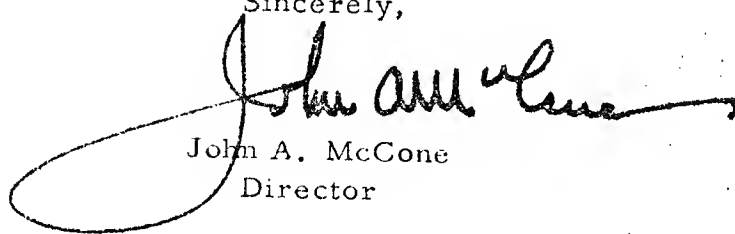
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In view of all this, I cannot criticize the authorized attribution.

The above background of CIA interest in, and continued study of, the Soviet economy is so well known to the press that a request for non-attribution would most certainly not have been respected. Nevertheless I have restated our rules so that no such circumstance will again occur without my consent and approval; and this, I assure you, would be given only after consultation with all interested parties.

I have tried to answer your questions by the above explanations but I assure you that there is no change of policy which will be a precedent for the future.

Sincerely,



John A. McCone
Director

JAM/mfb

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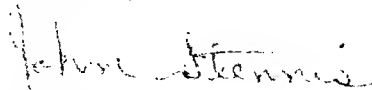
Honorable John A. McCone
Director, Central Intelligence Agency
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. McCone:

Recently I read an article stating that the CIA had held a press conference during which the Soviet economy was discussed.

My impression is that the holding of press conferences is a distinct departure from CIA's past practice. I would appreciate it if you would advise me of the significance of this occurrence and whether it represents a change of policy which will be a precedent for the future.

Sincerely,



John Stennis
United States Senator